

# Business

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**“The BID will make the city centre a better place for everybody”**



what people who work or visit the area want and expect. The Bristol City Centre BID is bringing together the wisdom of businesses, identifying priorities for the city centre and then delivering those for the benefit of all – a safer, healthier, and more warmly welcoming city.

“A BID is the only mechanism available to lever such additional funds into improving the city centre.”

Rundle says that extensive consultation with the business community has identified key priorities, notably sprucing the area up, tackling anti-social behaviour, acting as a unified voice for business – particularly on issues such as planning and transport – and consolidating services. “A consolidated waste scheme,” says Rundle by example, “brings down costs while improving air quality and traffic flows by reducing the number and frequency of collection lorries.”

Many business owners are in support. “Anything to make Bristol look better,” says Neil Hansford of Bristol Violin Shop on Upper Maudlin Street. “Some of the

## Making the city a centre

As the proposed City Centre Business Improvement District prepares to go to a ballot in July, **Laura Collacott** asks just what the BID can deliver and what local businesses think

**T**here’s a lot to love about the city centre: the grandeur of Queen Square, stately rise of Park Street, artisan shops in Colston Street balanced by reflected neon at the waterfront. But some argue that tangle of traffic cones (thanks, Metrobus), procession of fume-seeping vehicles and slightly brawly weekend atmosphere spoil the vibe, making it less welcoming for businesses and spenders alike.

In an effort to improve matters and set the centre up to hold its own against swanky counterparts in Cabot Circus, Clifton and Cribbs Causeway, plans have been forming for a Business Improvement District (BID), with the goal of promoting the area and improving footfall. If voted through by the business community when the ballot closes on July 5, the City Centre Business Improvement District will be Bristol’s sixth, alongside others

in Broadmead, CATER Business Park (behind Imperial Retail Park on Hartcliffe Way), Clifton Village, Bedminster and Gloucester Road.

Companies within BID districts must pay an additional levy on top of their business rates, in this case 1.5 per cent of their rateable value, which goes into a fund to support collective improvements, such as removing chewing gum and graffiti, improving signage, wrapping vacant properties and acting as a unified voice for business.

It’s not the first rodeo for this BID application; a previous proposal in 2015 failed despite, according to the proposal team, “uncovering considerable support for the principle”, because it was “felt by businesses to be too small and not


**KEITH RUNDLE**

sufficiently ambitious”.

As a result, the early budget of £1.5m has leapt four-fold, promising to raise and invest £6m over an initial five-year term to match BIDs in other core cities.

“The BID will help to make the city centre a better place that works for everybody,” says BID development manager Keith Rundle, pointing out that it will only deliver projects and services that are in addition to those provided by the council and police. “Bristol is a great place to work in and visit but it can be even better. There is a gap between how the city looks and

matters may seem small – such as improving street cleaning, for example,” says Mark Sheridan, head of Sanderson Weatherall’s Bristol office on Queen Square. “But positive changes like this can make a big difference in making Bristol a more welcoming city. We can also see clear benefits to having greater influence over planning and transport matters in our area.”

But not all agree. “It seems unlikely that charging retailers extra is going to improve their situation,” says Tom Kilner of the Bike Workshop on Colston Street. “We don’t have the spare money and it’s unlikely to change people’s shopping habits.”

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